

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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## SEBASTIAN STROME.

### CHAPTER IV. LOVERS AND FRIENDS.

FOR a man who enjoyed open-air walking so much, the minister seemed, now as always, singularly heedless of nature's aspects. To look at him, hurrying with downward brow through lovely landscapes, you would have said that he knew them not. And yet when, on meeting you, he threw up his kind and trenchant countenance, you could not but perceive that the beauty of the world was lost upon him less than upon the trained eye of many a painter. He knew the charms and changes of the months; and unobtrusive treasures of detail escaped him as little as did the broader-smiling graces. Perhaps he was planning his sermon the while; but he could consult the sweet wisdom of the woods and fields to make his argument sounder, or brighten his illustrations with the light of the seasons. Nevertheless, he uniformly walked with his eyes cast down. Whence, then, this minute and comprehensive vision? Was the whole man ocular, absorbent, at all points, of beauty, as the earth of rain and sunshine? At least, he confirmed the paradox that nature never discovers her choicest secrets to him who stares her rudely in the face.

When he had approached within two or three rods of the house, Mary saw him look up and turn off to the right, with the intention of passing round the corner to the eastern side. At another time she might have preferred to accord him the full compliment of a ceremonious reception by way of the main entrance and front drawing-room; but to-day she wanted to

have him quite to herself, at least for the first half-hour; so she quickly opened the glass-door of the conservatory and called to him.

"Mr. Strome! Mr. Strome! Please, I am here!"

He faced about at once, and beheld her standing half in, half out of the doorway, like a full-blossomed, sumptuous vine; smiling and rosy with a noble shyness; one hand twisting at the door-handle, her head inclined with a child-like pose over the other shoulder, so that it rested against the door frame; and her auburn hair, with its bright, crinkled roughness, relieved against the warm gloom of the conservatory behind her.

"Good morning, Mary," said the minister, coming up and taking her hand. He had the faculty of putting a quite extraordinary amount of cordiality into the most ordinary phrases and actions. "How well your hair looks! I once saw, in an excavation near Rome, a fresco of a Roman patrician maiden, which was like you. Or perhaps you were the artist's model? You look immortal."

"I don't want to be immortal," said Mary, her smile of welcome dying away. "Come inside and sit under the plantains. What made you think of coming? Did you feel that I was wanting to see you, and would have set out for Cedarhurst myself in another minute? I'm so glad."

"This is good!" said the minister, seating himself with a long breath of content. "Sebastian would envy me, if he saw me now."

He held Mary's hand as he spoke, and now raised it with ingenuous homage to his lips. Mary was secretly a little jealous of the sweet and simple way in which her

lover's father made love to her. It contrasted too favourably with Sebastian's own behaviour: moreover, the father inspired confidence, whereas the son excited, too often, a somewhat feverish suspense and questioning. "By-the-way," continued the minister, "we had a note from him this morning. We shall all meet here Friday evening, then."

"I hope so," said Mary, in a low tone.

"My dear Mary—dear daughter!" exclaimed the minister, with one of his sudden, energetic outbursts; "you can't think how pleased it makes me to think how happy you and Sebastian are in each other! When I was a young fellow, I used to think that no two people ever had been or could be so happy as my wife and I were: but now I admit you two to be our peers; for my boy is a better man than I ever was, and—— No!" he broke off with a laugh, "I can't say you are better than my wife—that couldn't be; but you are his chosen woman out of the world, and I would have chosen you out of the world for him!"

Mary turned her face and full hazel eyes slowly round upon the speaker. "How long ago were you married?" she asked after a moment.

"I don't know. It doesn't seem long—that is, time doesn't seem to have anything to do with it. Come to think of it, though, I suppose it must be—it can't be!—yes, it is really more than thirty years!" And the minister gave a "Humph!" of musing admiration at his own discovery. "I must tell Sue that!" he added half-aloud.

"But do you remember anything—how you felt, and what you did, and all that—do you remember after so long?" pursued Mary curiously.

Arthur Strome laughed his boyish laugh again. It was not quite a boy's laugh, however; it was as spontaneous as that, but more thoughtful, if thoughtfulness be predicable of laughter.

"I fancy we don't remember such things," he said, resting his chin on his breast and speaking meditatively. "There's no need to remember them; they are always there, fresh every morning and evening. We can't be said to remember violets and roses, though winter parts us from them every year, for we have never forgotten them; and still less are we likely to forget the immortal flowers of paradise, over which no earthly winter has power. The fact is, you see, Mary," continued the minister, looking pleasantly upon her, "the fact is, that my wife and I are still

at the beginning only of our love affair, and have had no time as yet to bring our memories into play. Memories were made for old people."

"Then I must be old," said Mary, letting her hands fall in her lap. "And Sebastian, too," she added, after a pause; "he has memories—I shall never know of what."

"You have hardly begun yet, I suppose," rejoined the minister, reaching forward to pluck a sprig of heliotrope, and smelling it while he spoke. "You are barely out of the chrysalid. Once get into the tide of life, and you'll find yourselves as young as my wife and I are. When I first met her I was a mooning hobbledehoy of an overgrown young wiseacre, who fancied I had yearnings after the infinite, and moral and political panaceas, and a wasted past and an ambiguous future—altogether very badly off. But when I saw her, it was like a new birth to me. I was filled with a life of my own: no longer a life at second-hand, made up from the poets and metaphysicians that I had read. I had been very idle before, though always fancying I was much occupied. It was just the other way now—no one was ever so busy, and yet my soul ached to be busier. But really I did a good deal. When I woke up in the morning (after dreaming feverishly of her all night) I had to plead on both sides of a hundred arguments as to whether or not I might venture, without injuring my cause, to call upon her on that day. When it was decided over every appeal that I should go, then the question would arise, what mood or what temper would it be proper for me to assume on entering her presence? By the time that was settled I was dressed and at breakfast. But I couldn't eat much breakfast in those days, the suspense spoilt my appetite. On the way from my house to hers I would fight with a dozen Apollyons and Giant Despairs, who tried to destroy me with the idea that I was dull and bored her, or that I had a rival. But all that was nothing to the way I was inwardly hurried to and fro when at last I was face to face with her. I had to watch every movement she made, and every chance expression that passed through her eyes, and devise a thousand conflicting interpretations of them in a minute; and then I was obliged to forecast what she would say or do next, and, when it turned out something different, to explain to myself the reason why. It was necessary that I should be perfectly in

sympathy with her; not only with her words and actions, but also with what lay at the bottom of her heart, which was generally quite the contrary. And though in the bottom of my own heart I knew intuitively what was in the bottom of hers, I must needs make her and myself wretched by pretending that I did not, and that I understood her to mean what she appeared to mean. Oh, how miserable we were, and how divinely happy! But all this was before we had formally confessed our love for each other."

"After that, I suppose, things went on more quietly?" said Mary, interlacing the ends of her fingers in her lap, and turning her face a little away from her companion.

"Oh, it was much worse than ever after that! It's wonderful what tremendous spiritual vicissitudes a lover—a pair of lovers, that is—can endure once or twice an hour, for days together, and yet survive. They love each other so, I suppose they would die of tenderness if they didn't constantly vary the strain by pretending to be offended or indifferent. But, ah me! the terrible part of it is, that no amount of experience can convince you that this last quarrel won't be the real and final one; and then you have such an exquisite access of agony at the thought, not of your desolation, but of hers—that is, I mean, supposing you were the man, which luckily you are not."

"Why should you say 'luckily'?"

"Because, Mary, after all, you are surer of your lover than he can be of you. You are an angel in his eyes, whom he can never be quite worthy to win; if he were to lose you, he would feel that he had no right to complain. He knows himself unworthy to kiss the hem of your garment; and when, instead, you let him touch your cheek or your lips, he is afraid of his bliss, and thinks it can't be real, and can't last. Sometimes, when he is alone, he throws himself down and weeps like a child to think how gracious and glorious you are."

The minister paused suddenly. He had been talking rapidly and ardently, looking straight before him, and perhaps forgetting, for the moment, that he had a listener. Mary was sitting turned partly away from him, her averted cheek resting on one hand. The other hand she had suddenly put out and laid on the minister's arm in the midst of his speech. Unawares, he had been doing over again, with severer effect, Aunt Sophia's work of an hour previous; and Mary had felt that she could

endure to hear no more. The minister at once knew, less by the testimony of his senses than by the instinct of sympathy that was in him, that she was fighting with some poignant emotion; he was startled and perplexed, and fearing to make matters worse by groping efforts to put right an unknown wrong, he could only remain silent, his heart meanwhile overflowing with so much compassion and kindness, that it was a wonder if Mary were not directly conscious thereof.

"Forgive me!" she said at last, facing him with flushed cheeks. "I have been out of sorts all the morning. It was partly for that I was coming to see you."

"There, there, let us forgive each other then!" interposed the minister, with all the cheeriness of tone that he could muster. "I said more than I ought to have said——"

"Is it all true?" burst out the young woman, with all the depth of her voice. "It need not be always true—people are so different!" She was breaking through her self-control, drawing in deep breaths that shook her bosom. "I mean that if—any two people never had any of those lovers' quarrels, as they are called—it wouldn't show that they—did not truly love each other? No, of course; I understand what you meant, you—you needn't tell me—I am happy—perfectly happy—oh, oh, don't look at me! let me be!"

She pressed her forehead against the back of the rustic bench, and gave way to passionate sobs and tears. Mr. Strome softly arose, and moved away down the little path to the other end of the conservatory. "What is troubling her? what can there be to make her unhappy?" were the questions he asked himself again and again. The fragrant blossoms of the flowers seemed to smile upon his perplexity. He pressed his forehead against the glass, and gazed out over the keen-aired landscape. How wholesome and peaceful the earth looked, even in frost! How briskly that distant figure stepped along beneath the leafless trees, on his way towards the house! There was, by-the-way, something vaguely familiar in his gait and aspect, but the minister's thoughts were too much preoccupied to admit of his immediately recognising him. Presently the figure was lost to sight behind a clump of shrubbery. "It was Fawley!" suddenly said the minister to himself. Then, by an association of ideas, such as often makes that seem plausible which is in reality unlikely, he made Fawley accountable in some way



for Mary's distress. "She had allowed him to have hopes, perhaps; now she blames herself, and fancies, probably, that Sebastian may end by doing so too. Yes, that must be it; I'm glad it's nothing serious. But Fawley must be coming here; and I have not said a word yet about Fanny!"

He turned, and walked slowly back through the leaves and flowers to the embowered seat. Mary had stopped crying, and was sitting with downcast looks and listless hands, but apparently quite calm. The traces of her emotion had no power to mar her beauty. Whether sleeping, laughing, weeping, glad, or angry, Mary Dene's countenance always retained its superb balance of lines and proportions. A sculptor, with an eye thoroughly trained to the height of the old classic standard, would have valued Mary's head even more than the painter who saw the ideal of Titian in her complexion and hair. Perfect form is far rarer, and also far more powerful, than perfect colour.

"I am very much ashamed of myself," said Mary, lifting her eyelashes for a moment as her friend approached. "I have felt one of my wicked fits coming on for some time past. I am only sorry it should have happened while you were here. I shall be very good now for days and days. You haven't told me whether there was anything particular—I mean, whether you couldn't suggest something about our Christmas-tree, or the arrangements for the parish children. Is there nothing I can do?"

"There will be nothing wanting to the complete happiness of everybody," returned Mr. Strome, seating himself beside her again. "You have not lived long in the world, Mary, but you have increased the joy of many people. For one thing, you have helped to make my life a happier one than most men's, by promising to make its happiness hereditary."

"I don't know—I hope I may," she said, looking away abstractedly.

"It's delightful to think how much good you and Sebastian will be able to do," the minister resumed. "I have had many schemes, but I could not carry them out. I hadn't the means; nor, probably, the capacity—only the will. You and Sebastian will have all three."

"I may be able to do something with the Home—I hope so," said Mary. She spoke almost apathetically. The fire of her spirit had sunk back after its out-

burst, and would no longer respond to ordinary stimulants. The intellectual side of her nature might be interested, but there was to be no more emotion at present.

"You have no inmates for the Home as yet?"

"No; none as yet."

"I have one to propose to you," said the minister, bending forwards and looking on the ground, his hands on his knees.

The slight but perceptible alteration in his voice, indicating that he had entered a new region of feeling, caused Mary to rouse herself somewhat, and turn towards him. Her expression was as if emerging from a cloud. She was gathering up the echoes of what had been lately spoken, and trying to order them by a single swift effort of the mind.

"An inmate of the Home?" she said, after a moment; and then, reading shrewdly in the other's face, and hazarding the guess from a trust in coincidence, she added, before he could reply: "You mean Fanny!"

"She has written to you also, then?"

"No. Is her address Number Ninety-seven, Falkirk Road?"

The minister pulled his letter out of his pocket and consulted it. "Yes; you are right," he said. "Have you known it long?"

Miss Dene smiled a little at the surprise in his face. She shook her head. "Not very long. Does she mention having seen anyone?"

"I happen to know that her mother heard of her last night from that young fellow Prout, who used to be in service at Lady Featherstone's. He caught sight of her at the corner of a street, as he was passing in an omnibus."

"Prout? Where is he now?"

"He has a situation in London, I believe; but comes up here once in a while to see his friends. He used to be very fond of poor Fanny—before she left us."

"He followed her home, I suppose, or at least found out where she lived?"

"She disappeared before he could alight. That is his story. It's of no consequence, since we have her address from herself. Will you read her letter?"

Mary took it in one hand, and perused it critically and not very sympathetically.

"This ends the doubt," she remarked. "The uncharitable people were, after all, in the right."

"They are always in the wrong, nevertheless," replied the minister, with a sigh.

Miss Dene rested her elbows on her knees and her face between her hands, and



in this position appeared to cogitate gravely for several moments. By-and-by she sat erect, and taking from her pocket a folded paper, she held it out to Mr. Strome, with the words: "I got that this morning."

The minister's brows drew together as he glanced through the writing. "This is anonymous!" he exclaimed. "Have you any clue?"

"No; but since you have the news independently of this, it's no matter; I can ignore it now, and act independently. It couldn't have been Prout—he wouldn't both have written anonymously to me, and spoken personally to Mrs. Jackson. But I don't care now. It's no matter."

Mr. Strome read the communication again. "It would seem by this as if your enquiry into Fanny's situation were to result in the discovery of some fact which the writer knows, but fears to put his name to—something libellous, consequently. But libellous against whom, unless against the scoundrel who led the poor child astray! But how could knowing about him concern you? That's curious!"

"We shall soon find out probably," Miss Dene said with indifference.

"That brings me to my business," rejoined the minister, returning the letter, which the young lady thrust carelessly back into her pocket. "Fanny, you see, is evidently shy about coming back here—as well she may be, poor girl—and only wants to provide a resource in the worst contingency: her own death and the survival of the little one. Now there is no special likelihood of her dying; but, on the other hand, it would be tempting Providence for us to let her pass through her trial among strangers. She must be brought here; someone whom she respects and will obey must go and fetch her."

"You mean me, I suppose," said Miss Dene composedly. "Yes; I can do it. Fanny will obey me."

"This is a man's work, my dear daughter," the minister answered, grasping his knees nervously. "I wanted to go myself, only I thought of someone else. I thought of Sebastian."

Miss Dene emerged from her lassitude at once. She looked at her companion with knit brows and parted lips.

"Sebastian—Sebastian Strome?" She paused a little, and then began to laugh, not constrainedly, but as if really amused. "Do you really mean to make Sebastian do a thing like that? I'm afraid he won't thank you—he won't like it."

The minister warmed a little at this. "His business is to do such things as a servant of God, not for his own pleasure. I don't want him to like it."

"But different people are fitted for different duties. Sebastian, somehow, seems intended to help only rich and cultivated people to be good. I don't mean exactly that," added Miss Dene, still smiling; "indeed, I don't know that I ever thought about the matter before; but I am sure he would be quite out of his element with Fanny. He wouldn't really know what to do or say, and vulgarity and ignorance displease him intensely. It's constitutional, I suppose; he isn't to blame for it, is he?"

"He would be to blame only if he gave way to it; and that I should be sorry to believe him capable of," said the minister, lifting his hands a little from his knees. "No; you hardly do him justice there, Mary. I admit his fastidiousness, but he has the virtue to overcome it. Elegance of life, cultivation, light—those things are his snare; but if he is to lead souls to heaven, or even bring his own there, he must work amidst those very classes of the people whom he would naturally most avoid. I've spoken to him of this more than once, and I think he feels I'm right. And the reason he's glad of your wealth and position, Mary, is not because it will bring him into closer relations with the society he most enjoys, but because it will give him the means of succouring those whose material condition might most repel him. Sebastian is too true a man to think of money."

"Oh, Mr. Strome," interposed Mary, in half-playful remonstrance, touching his restless hands lightly with one of her own, "surely you aren't going to deny that Sebastian means to marry me for the sake of dissipating my income in selfish extravagance?"

At this sally they both laughed, and the little cloud that had threatened to rise between them dissolved away. "I will leave Sebastian himself to convince you of that," he said; "meanwhile, what do you decide? Shall he go for Fanny? After all, he will probably enter into the matter with more heartiness than you suppose. He was always interested in Fanny, you remember; and I believe has done her several little kindnesses at various times."

"Oh, has he? I don't recollect his ever having mentioned it to me."

At this juncture an interruption occurred which the minister might have foreseen,

but which, at all events, took Miss Dene by surprise. The voice of Aunt Sophia was audible, approaching through the adjoining breakfast-room, calling in persuasive intonations: "Mary! Mary, darling! Where is my Mary hidden away?" And finally the intonations entered the conservatory, with a man's step sounding behind them. "Ah, there she is!" cried Aunt Sophia joyously; "and if there isn't dear Mr. Strome with her! Selim, love, you are fortunate. See, Mary, the old friend I have brought you."

Selim Fawley came forward, looking handsome, gentlemanly, and deferential, and not obtrusively Judaic. This young man possessed a remarkable faculty for expressing by gestures, glances, and a general carriage of the body his profound respect and admiration for ladies. When he spoke the effect of the dumb play was, perhaps, a little marred; for though his society voice was hushed and gently modulated, and his phrases those of a man of education and refinement, still there was something in the play of his red lips while talking, and a Semitic humidity in his narrow brown eyes when smiling, and yet more when laughing, which tended to counterbalance his many solid attractions in the judgment of certain ultra-fastidious Christian critics. But he was generally admitted to be an honest, straightforward, well-meaning, and good-hearted fellow; and his friends maintained that underneath his modest and unassuming exterior he concealed a mind and talents of a high order; and it was beyond cavil that he had taken high honours at the university, and might, but for an unfortunate illness, have taken the very highest.

Such as he was, therefore, Mr. Selim Fawley came forward, and prostrated himself, figuratively, at the feet of the heiress of Dene. He said he found himself passing through the neighbourhood, and that almost without his conscious volition his steps had led him to the Hall. It was to him a delightful impromptu; but he was regretfully aware that the earliness of the hour rendered his intrusion even more unwarrantable than — However, he must proceed on his way immediately, and he would trust that the brevity of his stay would in some measure be accepted as compensation for his unceremonious appearance.

Miss Dene, who had given less heed to the purport of this speech than to the physical processes and embroideries

whereby it was accompanied, smilingly said that she was very glad to see him again, and that he must remain to lunch, which he promptly and earnestly protested with many thanks was unfortunately impossible; well, then, she supposed she must make the most of him while he did stay. How had he been, where had he been, and what had he been doing since — for the last few months? Enjoying himself in London, or on the Continent? No? She would have done so in his place; men have so many more opportunities than women in this civilised world.

With such lofty converse did these two persons regale each other, sauntering side by side up and down the conservatory paths, following a yard or two behind the Reverend Mr. Strome and Aunt Sophia. It was a curious phenomenon, but Mary Dene, when in Selim's company, was always impelled, as now, by who knows what perverse and mischievous spirit, to chatter to him in the above-indicated vein of reckless and almost coquettish banter, and to treat him with a certain sort of freedom which she never dreamt of adopting towards any other person of her acquaintance. It was the result, perhaps, of the species of good-humoured and confiding contempt which she could not help feeling for the young man, combined with a certain half-resentful amusement at the notion of his undertaking to be seriously in love with her. Finding it difficult or impracticable to get entertainment out of him in any other way, she had, we may suppose, instinctively resorted to the device of playing her wit upon him, and experimenting on the extent of her power. It was not creditable to Miss Dene, this behaviour, but it seemed to be inevitable; it had beguiled poor Selim into the rashness of a declaration, but it had never pretended to be anything more serious than it was. On this their first meeting since his last autumn's discomfiture, Miss Dene found it most natural or most convenient to fall at once into the old vein; and Selim acquiesced pliantly if not delightedly. He also attempted once or twice to draw the heiress a little out of earshot of the other couple; but these efforts were quietly but effectively opposed by the young lady. In process of time it became necessary for him to say that now he must be going. The four were at this juncture standing together in the breakfast-room.

"Ah! and, by-the-way, Mr. Strome," continued Selim, casting a respectful look in

the minister's direction, "I heard a piece of news yesterday which will interest you, though it is very sad news, I grieve to say. It is about that unfortunate young creature—I mean Fanny Jackson—she has been seen in London. Oh, I see you know—you have heard it already. I beg pardon."

"It certainly seems to be no secret," observed Mary smiling. "Where did you hear it, Mr. Fawley?"

"I have a servant, a sort of valet or factotum, Prout——"

"Oh, Prout is your man, is he?" broke in the minister. "He brought the first intelligence to Cedarhurst. Mary and I have just been discussing the matter."

"Ah, yes. Can I be of any use? I am on my way to London; and if I could do anything in the way of looking the poor creature up, you know, or taking her any message, I should be most happy."

"Thank you. That's very kind of you, Fawley——" began the minister, hesitating and looking at Miss Dene.

"We've already arranged about that. Sebastian—Mr. Strome is to go to her, and fetch her down here," she said at once, answering the glance.

"Sebastian? Oh, indeed," said Fawley, and stopped suddenly with a side-look towards Aunt Sophia.

As for the latter, she gave quite a start, and exclaimed: "My darling Mary! You're not in earnest, surely?"

"Miss Dene knows best what is proper," Fawley now said, with a low obeisance. "What she desires must be right."

"I'm very glad, Mary, that you agree with me," said the minister, his visage lighting up with interior pleasure.

"Yes, I daresay it will turn out all well," came dubiously from Aunt Sophia.

"It seems to me a very simple matter," Miss Dene rejoined rather haughtily. "I hardly expected to create such a sensation!"

A short, but slightly embarrassed pause ensued, to be broken by Fawley's making a fresh and this time effective motion towards departure. Miss Dene gave him her hand very frankly, and bade him not fail to be present on the coming Friday.

"I shall not live till then," he answered effusively; and saluting Mr. Strome, and dutifully kissing his affectionate aunt's cheek, he bowed himself out of the room.

"The heedless fellow!" cried Aunt Sophia, as soon as the door had closed; "he's gone, and left his cane behind him." And the good-natured creature caught it up and tripped after him.

She overtook him in the passage. Their eyes met and exchanged a sort of smile.

"Pas si mal!" said the lady.

"It certainly has turned out well, considering how near that idiot Prout came to spoiling everything," rejoined the gentleman. "The thing will almost work itself now."

"There, off with you—and we'll keep each other informed," added the lady; and off he went.

Meanwhile, in the breakfast-room, the minister was also taking his leave, and saying: "Shall I write to him about it, then?"

"Ye-es," replied Mary musingly; "or, no," she went on, lifting her head with the air of taking a decision; "if you don't mind, I'll write to him myself."

"Good! that will do," he answered heartily. He took her hand, and stood for a moment holding it and looking at her. "Good-bye, dear daughter," he said. "I shall see you again on Friday, or before, God willing; but any parting in this world may be the last. God bless you! you've made me very happy." Mary leaned forward, and he kissed her forehead; then she saw him pass out through the conservatory, and so vanish from her sight.

#### PISTOL-PRACTICE IN AMERICA.

AN English dissenting minister, telling his experiences in the United States, relates how, journeying by rail there, as he was turning into his sleeping berth, immediately above that occupied by a newspaper editor, he saw the latter carelessly toss a revolver on to his pillow, and ventured to express the hope that his new acquaintance would not practise at the pattern of his bed, as it might prove worse than mosquitoes. "No, I won't," was the comforting rejoinder, "but you'll find a shooting-iron convenient as you travel; there ain't always an identity of opinions, and it's well to have a means of settlement handy."

Perhaps it was as well a German, new to California, was not so provided. While riding quietly along the road, near Sacramento, he heard a pistol-shot, a bullet whizzed by, and his hat shook. Taking it off he found a hole in it, and turning round saw a man revolver in hand, to whom he put the question: "Did you shoot at me?" "Yes," replied the other party; "I did. That's my horse you're riding; it was stolen



from me not long ago." "You must be mistaken," said the German; "I have owned him these three years." Looking the animal thoroughly over, the Californian quietly remarked: "Well, now I come to look at him, I believe I am mistaken. Excuse me, sir; won't you take a drink?"

A New York police-captain, interrupted in the execution of his duty by a bystander who asked what was the matter, curtly threatened to blow the inquisitive man's brains out if he didn't mind his own business. The man was an ex-member of the legislature, and complained at the police-court of the officer's conduct. Said the latter: "I told him to stand back, your honour, and if he hadn't I'd have put a bullet through him, as I promised him;" and the court did not think his over-zealousness deserving of rebuke.

When the guardians of the peace are so ready with the pistol, it is not surprising if its disturbers avail themselves of Colonel Colt's invention. In its issue of the 12th of August, 1878, a New York weekly paper chronicles the following pistol performances as occurring within the space of eight days:

At Clyde, Kansas, Hermann Tillspaw was shot by Michael Priest; Tillspaw's intimacy with Priest's wife led to the shooting. Priest was lodged in gaol, the entire community sympathising with him. At Savannah, Georgia, David Lebey barricaded his house, and threatened to kill his wife if anyone approached the place. Constable Morgan attempted his arrest, and was shot dead. A great crowd thereupon collected, but Lebey kept them at bay for five hours, until a sheriff's posse, forcing an entrance, secured him, without any further mischief being done. At a picnic near Bunker Hill, Mobile, Riley Cornstock got into an altercation with L. R. Willoughby, which resulted in the latter shooting and killing him. One Bill Simmons, while going into church at Seymour, Indiana, trod on the toes of a coloured man named Heenan Newby. The negro remonstrating, the pair stepped outside, and Simmons struck the negro, who avenged the blow by laying him low with a shot from his revolver. An Illinois farmer, attempting to re-enter a house out of which he had been turned, was shot in the side by a boy of ten. William McNutt and three friends, all hailing from the neighbourhood of Pittsburg, returning homeward in a buggy, pulled up by a peach-orchard, and jumped the fence. Before they could pull any fruit a shot was fired at them,

striking McNutt in the left breast. He clambered over the fence, took his seat in the buggy, and then fell back dead. The shooter was supposed to be the old and much respected citizen upon whose property he had intruded.

Mrs. Chapin, living at Luddington, Michigan, heard someone trying to enter her house at two o'clock in the morning. Not staying to rouse her invalid husband, she went downstairs to the children's bedroom. Presently, a man appeared at the window, and raised his hand to lift the sash. The ready woman shot him through the head. The verdict was justifiable homicide. A farmer of Lagrange, Chicago, hearing a noise among his horses, went to see what was disturbing them, and was shot dead by a horse-thief, who escaped. The Rev. Wade Hill, the much-beloved Baptist minister at Charlotte, North Carolina, meeting his son-in-law, Andy Scroggins, expostulated with him for beating his wife; from words they got to blows, but were parted before much damage was done on either side. A few days afterwards the two again met, Scroggins drawing at sight, and firing twice without effect ere the minister could reply in kind; then, at the first attempt, he gave his son-in-law his quietus, and made his own daughter a widow. At Philadelphia, James Lamont, a well-known negro minister, after killing a retired negro comedian in a trouble over the payment for drinks, tried to do the same by the bar-keeper, but failing, was marched to durance vile.

Messrs. J. D. Hall and Co., of Hope, Arkansas, received a very insulting communication from the legal firm of Erb, Summerfield, and Erb, of Little Rock. Being in that town upon business, Captain Hall, happening to meet Jacob Erb in the street, gave him a sound caning, and then went to Judge Morison's court, and gave himself up to answer for the assault. While waiting there, Erb came in with his three sons. The old man suddenly dealt Mr. Hall a murderous blow on the head with a loaded cane, and one of his sons fired a shot that took effect in the right leg; the wounded man being unable to get a return shot, before the brave four took to their heels and scattered. At Ansten, Tennessee, Edward Fretwell and Budd Evans made for one another with their revolvers, and opened fire almost at the same moment, Fretwell putting four bullets into Evans, not three inches apart, falling himself to his opponent's second shot; both dying where they

fell. During the encounter, a brother of Evans rode up and emptied his revolver into Fretwell's body, and the coroner's jury could not decide whether he was killed by the dead or the living Evans. A temperance meeting, held in the peaceful village of New Brighton, Staten Island, was startled from its propriety by a man rushing in, shouting: "Men, don't sit here while an assassin is shooting people in the street!" The assemblage broke up instant. The men, arming themselves with anything that came handy, hurried in pursuit of the culprit, and succeeded, not only in capturing him, but, what was a more difficult matter, in lodging him in prison, beyond the reach of Judge Lynch. He proved to be a shiftless ne'er-do-well, named Dempsey, who had been amusing himself by shooting at passers-by, and had dangerously wounded a woman as she sat in the basement of her own house.

On the evening of the 12th of August, some two thousand citizens assembled at Edgefield, South Carolina, to assist at the opening of the Democratic campaign, among them being James Booth, Brooker Toney, and his brother Mark. There was a feud of many years' standing between the Booths and the Toneys. By-and-by a man began abusing a negro, in whose behalf Brooker Toney interfered; whereupon James Booth interfered too, of course espousing the other side. Pistols were drawn, but the quarrellers were parted. A little later on Toney left the meeting and rode to the village, followed by the Booths, and a terrible fight, in which the friends of both parties freely participated, came off in the public square. Brooker Toney killed James and Thomas Booth, and was himself hit in the back and killed. Benjamin Booth was mortally wounded, Mark Toney and W. Coleman seriously wounded, and five others were more or less hurt, before the disturbance was quelled by the State troops. At another "public speaking" down Memphis way a melee ensued, resulting in the death of a negro, and the reporter of the affair pleasantly remarks: "The river counties of Arkansas promise lively shooting sport between now and election."

Even the Footlight Gossip of a New York paper begins with the relation of a little difficulty between an actress and a gentleman described as a Teutonic dialect writer, in which the dialect writer, aggravated by some jealous reproaches, retorted by firing, ineffectively, at the lady; who,

wrenching the revolver from his grasp, took truer aim, and laid him low with a ball between the eleventh and twelfth ribs, and, wonderful to say, was taken into custody, at the instigation of the doctor called to the wounded man's assistance. A little farther down the column of theatrical items we read: "Fanny Gatewood, who lately lectured at Indianapolis on Madened by Love, attempted to let daylight into one Harry Morse, of that city, whom she accused as the cause of her griefs. The pistol snapped, and was taken from her."

General Cassius Clay, sometime the United States minister at St. Petersburg, detecting the coloured cook of his establishment in Richmond, Kentucky, making too free with his silver spoons, discharged the dishonest dame. Riding out one day in search of a successor, he saw the cook's son, Perry White, standing by the side of a loose horse in a field. Jumping rather hastily to the conclusion that the young negro meant mischief, the general leaped from his horse, and confronting White, ordered him to throw up his hands. That command being obeyed, it was followed by another to leave the place, but not to dare to move until the general was in the saddle again. No sooner was Clay's back turned than the negro did move, and the general, facing round, fired at him twice, hitting him in the neck and breast, and bringing him to the ground a dead man. Then the gallant general rode into Richmond, and gave himself up to the authorities to answer for his deed. He knew he was safe enough. An inquest was duly held, and the jury found that Perry White came to his death by a pistol-shot wound inflicted by C. M. Clay, their verdict ending: "Testimony being given us under oath by C. M. Clay, he being the only witness, we are constrained to justify the said Clay, and believe that he did it in self-defence."

That noble art was really displayed in an affray in Wayne County, Mississippi, in January last. The trouble arose out of a dispute as to the ownership of some land, between three negroes on the one part, and three brothers, named Gamblins, on the other part. Thinking to decide matters by force of arms, the negroes "ambuscaded" the Gamblins near a place called Red Bluff, killing one, and wounding another badly; but they had no cause for exultation, two of them being killed then and there by the return fire of the whites, and the third taking care not

to wait the arrival of the sheriff, who came on the scene a few hours afterwards.

How easily an impromptu duel may be brought about is shown in the story of an affair that came off at Eastville, Virginia, in the spring of 1878. A well-connected young fellow, named Sidney Pitts, refusing to pay twenty dollars he owed one Bullingham, of whose estate Alfred P. Thorn was administrator, the latter obtained a warrant for his arrest, and went with the deputy-sheriff to turn it to use. They caught their man as he was making his way to a steamer bound for Baltimore, and seeing he was inclined to be troublesome the sheriff drew his pistol, and called upon a farmer standing near to assist him. That worthy, with the best intentions, seized Thorn by the throat, and nearly choked him before he could be persuaded that he had got hold of the wrong man; and taking advantage of the blunder, Pitts boarded the steamer, and upon the sheriff following suit, pitched him overboard. This happened on a Friday. On Sunday he returned home, and the following Thursday was sitting on the "stoop" of a house adjoining the court-house, when Lawyer Thorn passed by. Jumping up, Pitts cried: "Hold on, Thorn, I want to see you." Thorn stopped. Pitts demanded an explanation of his attempted arrest, which the other declined to give; whereupon Pitts called him a liar and a scoundrel. Flushing up angrily, Thorn drew back a pace, put his hand to his pocket, and drew out his revolver. Said Pitts: "If that is your game, I can shoot as quick as you can," and he drew also. They were standing scarcely three feet apart, and fired simultaneously; the ball from Pitts's pistol striking Thorn in the hand, while his ball made a furrow in Pitts's right arm. Stepping back, and slightly stooping over their weapons, they turned the cylinders, and in the act of straightening up fired again together; Pitts falling to the ground, shot through the right lung, to be carried into a house, and die without speaking a word. As the smoke from the pistols cleared away Thorn was seen staggering backwards; vainly endeavouring to grasp the fence, ere he sank down insensible, with his jaw-bone crushed, and a bullet lodged at the back of his head, which had entered his face just above the corner of his mouth—a warning to fire-eating young lawyers to stick to the proper weapons of their craft.

Many an equally tragic tale has been recorded in American newspapers, but we

shall only try our reader's patience with one more, coming to us from California. High up in the Tehachapi mountains is a little hamlet of the same name. There, one November day in 1878, Guadalupe Astorga and Jerry Glenn met, and no sooner met than they fell to abusing each other their heartiest. Astorga had incurred Glenn's hatred by protecting his wife from his drunken violence, and finally helping her to get beyond his reach, for which good deed the Californian had sworn to be revenged. With that intent he had tracked Astorga to Tehachapi, but on encountering him, contented himself with a wordy quarrel, ending in Astorga's riding away, soon to be followed by his enemy, who, however, did not succeed in overtaking him. Towards evening Glenn went to a place occupied by a Mr. Paine, and enquired if they had seen a man on a grey horse, and being asked who he was looking for, replied that he was seeking Astorga, and would kill him that night if it was the last thing he did. With that pleasant information he rode away. To the no little dismay of the Paine household—consisting then only of women and children—Astorga himself rode up a short time afterwards, and while he halted in front of the house up galloped Glenn, pistol in hand. The two men met in the highway. No words were spoken, no ammunition wasted. "Each made a rush for the other, and coming to close quarters they clinched, each still sitting on his horse. The Paine family, anticipating trouble, fled from the scene, leaving no witnesses of the final encounter. The women heard six shots fired. When the noise of battle ceased they returned, and found the two men lying in the road, still closely embraced, each grasping his pistol, and both dead. Their horses, uninjured, stood a little distance away, as if awaiting their riders. When assistance came it was found that each man had shot three times, that number of chambers in their respective pistols being empty, and each had received three wounds." A drawn battle that, if ever there was one.

#### SONNET.

HIGH on a gnarled and mossy forest bough,  
Dreaming I hang between the earth and sky,  
The golden moon through leafy mystery  
Gazing aslant at me with glowing brow,  
And since all living creatures slumber now,  
Oh, nightingale, save only thou and I,  
Tell me the secret of thine ecstacy,  
That none may know save only I and thou.



Alas, all vainly doth my heart entreat;  
Thy magic pipe unfolds but to the moon  
What wonders thee in fairy worlds befel.  
To her is sung thy midnight-music sweet,  
And e'er she wearies of thy mellow tune  
She hath thy secret, and will guard it well!

## VIXEN.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET," &c. &c.

### CHAPTER XLVI. THE NEAREST WAY TO NORWAY.

No such blessing as a good night's rest was in store for Violet Tempest on that night of the first of August. She lay in a state of half-consciousness that was near akin to delirium. When she closed her eyes for a little while the demon of evil dreams took hold of her. She was in the old familiar home-scenes with her dear dead father. She acted over again that awful tragedy of sudden death. She was upbraiding her mother about Captain Winstanley. Bitter words were on her lips; words more bitter than even she had ever spoken in all her intensity of adverse feeling. She was in the woody hollow by Rufus's Stone, blindfold, with arms stretched helplessly out, seeking for Rorie among the smooth beech-boles, with a dreadful sense of loneliness, and a fear that he was far away, and that she would perish, lost and alone, in that dismal wood.

So the slow night wore on to morning. Sometimes she lay staring idly at the stars, shining so serenely in that calm summer sky. She wondered what life was like yonder, in those remote worlds. Was humanity's portion as sad, fate as adverse, there as here? Then she thought of Egypt, and Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra—that story of a wild, undisciplined love, grand in its lawless passion, its awful doom. To have loved thus, and died thus, seemed a higher destiny than to do right, and patiently conquer sorrow, and live on somehow to the dismal end of the dull blameless chapter.

At last—with what laggard steps, with what oppressive tardiness!—came the dawn, in long streaks of lurid light above the edge of the distant waters.

"Red sky at morning is the shepherd's warning!" cried Vixen, with dry lips. "Thank God, there will be rain to-day! Welcome change after the hot arid skies, and the cruel brazen sun, mocking all the miseries of this troubled earth."

She felt almost as wildly glad as the Ancient Mariner at the idea of that blessed

relief: and then, by-and-by, with the changeful light shining on her face, she fell into a deep sleep.

Perhaps that morning sleep saved Vixen from an impending fever. It was the first refreshing slumber she had had for a week—a sweet, dreamless sleep. The breakfast-bell rang unheeded. The rain, forecast by that red sky, fell in soft showers upon the verdant isle, and the grateful earth gave back its sweetest perfumes to the cool, moist air.

Miss Skipwith came softly in to look at her charge, saw her sleeping peacefully, and as softly retired.

"Poor child! the initiation has been too much for her unformed mind," she murmured complacently, pleased with herself for having secured a disciple. "The path is narrow and rugged at the beginning, but it will broaden out before her as she goes on."

Violet awoke, and found that it was mid-day. Oh, what a blessed relief that long morning sleep had been! She woke like a creature cured of mortal pain. She fell on her knees beside the bed, and prayed as she had not often prayed in her brief careless life.

Her mood and temper were wondrously softened after a long interval of thought and prayer. She was ashamed of her waywardness of yesterday—her foolish, unreasonable passion.

"Poor Rorie, I told him to keep his promise, and he has obeyed me," she said to herself. "Can I be angry with him for that? I ought to feel proud and glad that we were both strong enough to do our duty."

She dressed slowly, languid after the excitement of yesterday, and then went slowly down the broad bare staircase to Miss Skipwith's parlour.

The lady of the manor received her with affectionate greeting, had a special pot of tea brewed for her, and insisted upon her eating some dry toast, a form of nourishment which this temperate lady deemed a panacea in illness.

"I was positively alarmed about you last night, my dear," she said; "you were so feverish and excited. You read too much, for the first day."

"I'm afraid I did," assented Vixen, with a faint smile; "and the worst of it is, I believe I have forgotten every word I read."

"Surely not!" cried Miss Skipwith, horrified at this admission. "You seemed

so impressed—so interested. You were so full of your subject."

"I have a faint recollection of the little men in the hieroglyphics," said Vixen, "but all the rest is gone. The images of Antony and Cleopatra, in Shakespeare's play, bring Egypt more vividly before me than all the history I read yesterday."

Miss Skipwith looked shocked, just as if some improper character in real life had been brought before her.

"Cleopatra was very disreputable, and she was not Egyptian," she remarked severely. "I am sorry you should waste your thoughts upon such a person."

"I think she is the most interesting woman in ancient history," said Vixen wilfully, "as Mary Queen of Scots is in modern history. It is not the good people whose images take hold of one's fancy. What a faint idea one has of Lady Jane Grey! And, in Schiller's Don Carlos, I confess the Marquis of Posa never interested me half so keenly as Philip of Spain."

"My dear, you are made up of fancies and caprices. Your mind wants balance," said Miss Skipwith, affronted at this frivolity. "Had you not better go for a walk with your dog? Doddery tells me that poor Argus has not had a good run since last week."

"How wicked of me!" cried Vixen. "Poor old fellow! I had almost forgotten his existence. Yes; I should like a long walk, if you will not think me idle."

"You studied too many hours yesterday, my dear. It will do you good to relax the bow to-day. 'Non semper arcum tendit Apollo.'"

"I'll go for my favourite walk to Mount Orgueil. I don't think there'll be any more rain. Please excuse me if I am not home in time for dinner. I can have a little cold meat, or an egg, for my tea."

"You had better take a sandwich with you," said Miss Skipwith, with unusual thoughtfulness. "You have been eating hardly anything lately."

Vixen did not care about the sandwich, but submitted, to please her hostess; and a neat little paper parcel, containing about three ounces of nutriment, was made up for her by Mrs. Doddery. Never had the island looked fairer in its summer beauty than it looked to-day, after the morning's rain. These showers had been to Jersey what sleep had been to Vixen. The air was soft and cool; sparkling rain-drops fell like diamonds from the leaves of ash

and elm. The hedge-row ferns had taken a new green, as if the spirit of spring had revisited the island. The blue bright sea was dimpled with wavelets.

What a bright glad world it was, and how great must be the sin of a rebellious spirit, cavilling at the dealings of its Creator! The happy dog bounced and bounded round his mistress; the birds twittered in the hedges; the passing farm-labourer, with his cart-load of seaweed, smacked his whip cheerily as he urged his patient horse along the narrow lane. A huge van-load of Cockney tourists, singing a boisterous chorus to the last music-hall song, passed Vixen at a turn of the road, and made a blot on the serene beauty of the scene. They were going to eat lobsters and drink bottled beer and play skittles at Le Tac. Vixen rejoiced when their rancous voices died away on the summer breeze.

There was a meadow-path which lessened the distance between Les Tourelles and Mount Orgueil. Vixen had just left the road and entered the meadow when Argus set up a joyous bark, and ran back to salute a passing vehicle. It was a St. Helier's fly, driving at a tremendous pace in the direction from which she had come. A young man lay back in the carriage, smoking a cigar, with his hat slouched over his eyes. Vixen could just see the strong sunburnt hand flung up above his head. It was a foolish fancy, doubtless, but that broad brown hand reminded her of Rorie's. Argus leaped the stile, rushed after the vehicle, and saluted it clamorously. The poor brute had been mewed up for a week in a dull court-yard, and was rejoiced at having something to bark at.

Vixen walked on to the seashore, and the smiling little harbour, and the brave old castle. There was the usual party of tourists following the guide through narrow passages and echoing chambers, and peering into the rooms where Charles Stuart endured his exile, and making those lively remarks and speculations whereby the average tourist is prone to reveal his hazy notions of history. Happily Vixen knew of quiet corners upon the upward walls whither tourists rarely penetrated; nooks in which she had sat through many an hour of sun and shade, reading, musing, or sketching, with free, untutored pencil, for the mere idle delight of the moment. Here in this loneliness, between land and sea, she had nursed her sorrow and made

much of her grief. She liked the place. No obtrusive sympathy had ever made it odious to her. Here she was mistress of herself and of her own thoughts. To-day she went to her favourite corner, a seat in an angle of the battlemented wall, and sat there with her arms folded on the stone parapet, looking dreamily seaward, across the blue Channel to the still bluer coast of Normandy, where the towers of Contance showed dimly in the distance.

Resignation. Yes; that was to be her portion henceforward. She must live out her life, in isolation almost as complete as Miss Skipwith's, without the innocent delusions which gave substance and colour to that lonely lady's existence.

"If I could only have a craze," she thought hopelessly, "some harmless monomania which would fill my mind! The maniacs in Bedlam, who fancy themselves popes or queens, are happy in their foolish way. If I could only imagine myself something which I am not—anything except poor useless Violet Tempest, who has no place in the world!"

The sun was gaining power, the air was drowsy, the soft ripple of the tide upon the golden sand was like a lullaby. Even that long sleep of the morning had not cured Vixen's weariness. There were long arrears of slumber yet to be made up. Her eyelids drooped, then closed altogether, the ocean lullaby took a still softer sound, the distant voices of the tourists grew infinitely soothing, and Vixen sank quietly to sleep, her head leaning on her folded arms, the gentle west wind faintly stirring her loose hair.

"Oh, happy kiss that woke thy sleep!" cried a familiar voice close in the slumberer's ear, and then a warm breath, which was not the summer wind, fanned the cheek that lay upmost upon her arm, two warm lips were pressed against that glowing cheek in ardent greeting. The girl started to her feet, every vein tingling with the thrilling recognition of her assailant. There was no one else—none other than he—in this wide world who would do such a thing! She sprang up, and faced him, her eyes flashing, her cheeks crimson.

"How dare you?" she cried. "Then it was you I saw in the fly? Pray, is this the nearest way to Norway?"

Yes, it was Rorie; looking exactly like the familiar Rorie of old; not one whit altered by marriage with a duke's only daughter; a stalwart young fellow in a

rough grey suit, a dark face sunburnt to deepest bronze, eyes with a happy smile in them, firmly-cut lips half hidden by the thick brown beard, a face that would have looked well under a lifted helmet—such a face as the scared Saxons must have seen among the bold followers of William the Norman, when those hardy Norse warriors ran amuck in Dover town.

"Not to my knowledge," answered this audacious villain, in his lightest tone. "I am not very geographical; but I should think it was rather out of the way."

"Then you and Lady Mabel have changed your plans?" said Vixen, trembling very much, but trying desperately to be as calmly commonplace as a young lady talking to an ineligible partner at a ball. "You are not going to the north of Europe?"

"Lady Mabel and I have changed our plans. We are not going to the north of Europe."

"Oh!"

"In point of fact, we are not going anywhere."

"But you have come to Jersey. That is part of your tour, I suppose?"

"Do not be too hasty in your suppositions, Miss Tempest. I have come to Jersey—I am quite willing to admit as much as that."

"And Lady Mabel? She is with you, of course?"

"Not the least bit in the world. To the best of my knowledge Lady Mabel—I beg her pardon—Lady Mallow—is now on her way to the fishing-grounds of Connemara with her husband."

"Rorie!"

What a glad happy cry that was! It was like a gush of sudden music from a young blackbird's throat on a sunny spring morning. The crimson dye had faded from Violet's cheeks a minute ago and left her deadly pale. Now the bright colour rushed back again, the happy brown eyes, the sweet blush-rose lips, broke into the gladdest smile that ever Rorie had seen upon her face. He held out his arms, he clasped her to his breast, where she rested unresistingly, infinitely happy. Great Heaven! how the whole world and herself had become transformed in this moment of unspeakable bliss! Rorie, the lost, the surrendered, was her own true lover after all!

"Yes, dear; I obeyed you. You were hard and cruel to me that night in the fir-plantation; but I knew in my heart of



hearts that you were wise, and honest, and true; and I made up my mind that I would keep the engagement entered upon beside my mother's death-bed. Loving or unloving I would marry Mabel Ashbourne, and do my duty to her, and go down to my grave with the character of a good and faithful husband, as many a man has done who never loved his wife. So I held on, Vixen—yes, I will call you by the old pet name now: henceforward you are mine, and I shall call you what I like—I held on, and was altogether an exemplary lover; went wherever I was ordered to go, and always came when they whistled for me; rode at my lady's jog-trot pace in the Row, stood behind her chair at the opera, endured more classical music than ever man heard before and lived, listened to my sweetheart's manuscript verses, and, in a word, did my duty in that state of life to which it had pleased God to call me; and my reward has been to be jilted with every circumstance of ignominy on my wedding-morning."

"Jilted!" cried Vixen, her big brown eyes shining in pleasantest mockery. "Why I thought Lady Mabel adored you?"

"So did I," answered Roderick naively, "and I pitied the poor dear thing for her infatuation. Had I not thought that I should have broken my bonds long ago. It was not the love of the duke's acres that held me. I still believe that Mabel was fond of me once, but Lord Mallow bowled me out. His eloquence, his parliamentary success, and above all his flattery, proved irresistible. The scoundrel brought a marriage certificate in his pocket when he came to stay at Ashbourne, and had the art to engage rooms at Southampton, and sleep there a night en passant. He left a portmanteau and a hat-box there, and that constituted legal occupancy; so, when he won Lady Mabel's consent to an elopement—which I believe he did not succeed in doing till the night before our intended wedding-day—he had only to ride over to Southampton and give notice to the parson and clerk. The whole thing was done splendidly. Lady Mabel went out at eight o'clock, under pretence of going to early church. Mallow was waiting for her with a fly, half a mile from Ashbourne. They drove to Southampton together, and were married at ten o'clock in the old church of St. Michael. While the distracted duchess and her women were hunting everywhere for the bride, and all the

visitors at Ashbourne were arraying themselves in their wedding finery, and the village children were filling their baskets with flowers to strew upon the pathway of the happy pair, emblematical of the flowers which do not blossom in the highway of life, the lady was over the border with Jock o' Hazeldean! Wasn't it fun, Vixen?"

And the jilted one flung back his handsome head and laughed long and loud. It was too good a joke, the welcome release coming at the last moment.

"At half-past ten there came a telegram from my runaway bride:

"Ask Roderick to forgive me, dear mamma. I found at the last that my heart was not mine to give, and I am married to Lord Mallow. I do not think my cousin will grieve very much."

"That last clause was sensible, anyhow, was it not, Vixen?"

"I think the whole business was very sensible," said Vixen, with a sweet grave smile. "Lord Mallow wanted a clever wife, and you did not. It was very wise of Lady Mabel to find that out before it was too late."

"She will be very happy as Lady Mallow," said Roderick. "Mallow will legislate for Ireland, and she will rule him. He will have quite enough of Home Rule, poor beggar. Hibernia will be Mabelised. She is a dear good little thing. I quite love her, now she has jilted me."

"But how did you come here?" asked Vixen, looking up at her lover in simple wonder. "All this happened only yesterday morning."

"Is there not a steamer that leaves Southampton nightly? Had there not been one I would have chartered a boat for myself. I would have come in a cockle-shell—I would have come with a swimming-belt—I would have done anything wild and adventurous to hasten to my love. I started for Southampton the minute I had seen that too blessed telegram; went to St. Michael's, saw the register, with its entry of Lord Mallow's marriage hardly dry; and then went down to the docks and booked my berth. Oh, what a long day yesterday was—the longest day of my life!"

"And of mine," sighed Vixen, between tears and laughter, "in spite of the Shepherd Kings."

"Are those Jersey people you have picked up?" Rorie asked innocently.

This turned the scale, and Vixen burst into a joyous peal of laughter.

"How did you find me here?" she asked.

"Very easily. Your custodian—what a grim-looking personage she is, by-the-way—told me where you were gone, and directed me how to follow you. I told her I had a most important message to deliver to you from your mother. You don't mind that artless device, I hope?"

"Not much. How is dear mamma? She complains in her letters of not feeling very well."

"I have not seen her lately. When I did, I thought her looking ill and worn. She will get well when you go back to her, Vixen. Your presence will be like sunshine."

"I shall never go back to the Abbey House."

"Yes, you will—for one fortnight, at least. After that your home will be at Briarwood. You must be married from your father's house."

"Who said I was going to be married, sir?" asked Vixen, with delicious coquetry.

"I said it—I say it. Do you think I am too bold, darling? Ought I to go on my knees, and make you a formal offer? Why, I have loved you all my life; and I think you have loved me as long."

"So I have, Rorie," she answered softly, shyly, sweetly. "I forswore myself that night in the fir-wood. I always loved you; there was no stage of my life when you were not dearer to me than anyone on earth, except my father."

"Dear love, I am ashamed of my happiness," said Roderick tenderly. "I have been so weak and unworthy. I gave away my hopes of bliss in one foolishly soft moment, to gratify my mother's dying wish—a wish that had been dinned into my ears for the last years of her life—and I have done nothing but repent my folly ever since. Can you forgive me, Violet? I shall never forgive myself."

"Let the past be like a dream that we have dreamt. It will make the future seem so much the brighter."

"Yes."

And then under the blue August sky, fearless and unabashed, these happy lovers gave each other the kiss of betrothal.

"What am I to do with you?" Vixen asked laughingly. "I ought to go home to Les Tourelles."

"Don't you think you might take me with you? I am your young man now, you know. I hope it is not a case of 'no followers allowed.'"

"I'm afraid Miss Skipwith will feel disappointed in me. She thought I was going to have a mission."

"A mission!"

"Yes; that I was going in for theology. And for it all to end in my being engaged to be married! It seems such a commonplace ending, does it not?"

"Decidedly. As commonplace as the destiny of Adam and Eve. Take me back to Les Tourelles, Vixen. I think I shall be able to manage Miss Skipwith."

### SEA CUSTOMS.

IN a late number of *ALL THE YEAR ROUND*\* an account was given of some old sea customs which have altogether died out, and of which the memory only lingers amongst the older generation of seafaring folk. In some cases, indeed, they have been resuscitated and, as it were, galvanised into a spurious vitality for the delectation of passengers oppressed by the ennui of a long voyage. For example, the ancient ceremonies observed on crossing the line, which became practically extinct twenty years ago, have been revived very recently on board the transports conveying reinforcements of soldiers to our troubled South African colony. It must have frequently happened, on these occasions, that the performances were as new and strange to many of the sailors taking part in them as they were to their military passengers. The fact is, the general tendency of our modern civilisation to induce similarity of habits and sentiments amongst all classes of men has begun to bear fruit afloat, and is fast rendering seamen much like other folk, and is robbing them of the characteristics which so long caused them to be regarded as an almost distinct species of our race. Still, some customs and peculiarities even now retain a certain share of their former vigour, and cling with persistent tenacity to that phase of life which is to be observed on board ship.

The rapid spread of education amongst the section of the nation from which our sailors are most largely drawn has done much towards obliterating the special peculiarities of diction by which they were once distinguished, but much of their ancient phraseology still remains. In the matter of personalities, for example, a

\* *ALL THE YEAR ROUND*, New Series, Vol. 22, p. 148, February 1st, 1879, "Seafaring Usages."

considerable number of epithets still retain their currency in nautical circles. Thus, a man whose face has been deeply pitted by the small-pox always receives the appellation of "rough"; and when a sailor speaks of "Rough Smith," or "Rough Jones," it is to be understood that the results of small-pox, rather than any peculiarity of manner or behaviour, is signified. So, too, a curly-headed shipmate is always addressed and alluded to as "Curly," a red-headed one as "Ginger," and a negro or coloured one of whatever shade as "Darkey." Nothing in the slightest degree opprobrious is intended to be conveyed by these appellations, and no one with whose name they are connected would think of resenting them. Owing possibly to the vast increase of the use of iron in ship-building, the ship's carpenter is now seldom or never spoken of as "Chips," but the boatswain is still talked of as "Pipes." The assistant to the ship's steward in men-of-war—the man who has special charge of the provisions for the crew—is always known as "Jack in the Dust," frequently abbreviated into "Dusty"; an epithet of which the origin is to be found in the small cloud of dust raised by him in his daily duty of issuing to the different messes the ration biscuit, or "bread," as sailors always call it. The chief of police, or master-at-arms, is familiarly alluded to as "Johndy," an evident shortening and corruption of the French term *gens d'armes*. A cook's mate is "Slushy"; a mizen-top man, chosen from amongst the youngest hands on board, in allusion to his tender age is a "Lamb," or a "Lammy"; whilst a lower-deck sweeper is entitled "Shakings," a name more exactly given to the shreds of rope and yarn which it is his duty to pick up and rescue from the dust-bin or tub.

Nautical etiquette requires that in friendly conversation allusions to the administration of justice afloat should be made with a certain circumlocution, or should be veiled by expressions not immediately intelligible to the uninitiated in the mysteries of a sea-life. An offender brought up for summary trial is said to be "taken where the boot shines," or to be "planked," or to be at "Shadwell." Minor punishments are still supposed to be included in the generic term "black-list," though the expression is dying out. The cell in which hardened offenders are occasionally confined is always the "chokey;" and the now rarely used cat-o'-nine-tails, and each dozen lashes inflicted by it, are

never called by any other name than "bag," without either definite or indefinite article. Sailors still give to the different substances of which their food is composed a variety of names, not perhaps known elsewhere than on board ship. An early meal of cocoa and biscuit is, for some reason which it is not easy to discover, always spoken of as "optional." Leavened bread, much more commonly eaten by seamen than formerly, is "soft bread," or "soft tack." A dish of odds-and-ends of fresh beef is "skewer o'," and pease-pudding is "dog's body." Pudding of any other kind still retains its ancient nautical name of "duff." A man's allowance of grog is his "navy," and the measure in which his share is given to him in his mess is a "tot." Names of other table utensils, such as "kids," "pannikins," and "monkeys," are fast becoming obsolete. If soup be somewhat deficient in strength, it is said to have "a good deal of the fore-hold about it"; the fore-hold being the place in which the water for drinking is stored. The "blacks," which will occasionally defy the efforts of the cook, and get into the dishes he is preparing, are called "galley-pepper." When some article of food is running short there is "a southerly wind" in the receptacle in which it is kept.

Most of the special trades—such as those of the rope-maker, sail-maker, blacksmith, &c.—which send representatives on board ship have peculiar customary appellations, but few of them are characteristically nautical, and are perhaps frequently used on land. Epithets indicative of nationality are numerous. A Maltese is a "Smyche"; a shipmate from the Mauritius a "Payah Frenchman"; a north-countryman, "Geordie"; a man from the western counties, "Jagger"; and a rustic lout, "Joskin." The appellation "landsman" was, till within the last thirty years, official, but it has now been given up; it never was comprised in the phraseology of the 'fore-mast hands, who to this day speak of a landsman as a "shore-going" man. In fact, the latter term has amongst the sailors of the navy a value about equivalent to that of the word "civilian" amongst soldiers. Many other remnants of a quaint vocabulary are still to be met with on board ship. The period of time devoted to certain duties is a "trick;" a sailor "goes" to the fore part of the ship, but he "lies aft" when approaching the stern; and never "changes," but always "shifts" his clocking.

Among old sea customs which continue



extant ceremonial observances occupy no unimportant place. The departure and return on board of the captain is heralded by the sound of prolonged whistling from the pipe, nauticé the "call" of a boat-swain's-mate. When that portion of the Naval Discipline Act known as The Articles of War is read in public, on the quarter-deck, reader and audience remain bare-headed. Every person reaching the quarter-deck from below, from forward, or from outside the ship, is expected to salute the place by touching or raising his cap. The "weather," or windward side, is still considered sacred to the captain, the officer of the watch, and others of superior rank, though the almost universal use of steam is naturally more and more interfering with the observance of the practice. When a ship is ordered to be equipped the initial ceremony is the hoisting of a pendant, the symbol of command, and, as it were, of the mobilisation, or placing on a war-footing, of the crew. When the vessel is paid-off, the last act is the striking of the same pendant. Passing ships at sea "exchange colours," as it is called; that is, each hoists her national ensign. A merchant-ship will usually "dip"—that is, lower—her colours and re-hoist them, and the war-vessel is expected to return the compliment. It is, however, an ancient and still existing regulation of the British navy that no ship of Her Majesty shall ever be the first to "dip" the ensign, but shall only do so as an acknowledgment of such a compliment being first paid to her by a stranger. The ceremony of hoisting the colours at eight or nine o'clock in the morning, according to the season, has lost in our own fleet much of its old brilliancy, though the case is different in foreign navies, which undoubtedly borrowed it from us. However, as the ensign goes up the National Anthem is played, and as it is lowered the muskets—nowadays rifles—of the sentries are discharged. Officers arriving on board are received at the ladder by two "side-boys"; whilst admirals, in addition to other attendants, are received by four. After dark, when a boat approaching the ship is hailed, if a commissioned officer is carried the proper answer is "Aye, aye;" if a captain, the name of his ship; if an admiral, the word "Flag." Persons below the rank of officer, even if coming on board, are expected to answer, "No, no."

In ships stationed abroad the men receive pay monthly, and the sum paid them they for some reason call "compo." As each man leaves the pay-table he has to

pass near the ship's barber, who usually holds a basin in his hand, into which those who have availed themselves of his services since the last payment are expected to deposit the odd coppers of their wages. The same personage takes up a similar position when soap has been issued to the crew; but this time he has a knife in his hand instead of the basin; and his ship-mates hold out to him, as they pass, the bar of soap which they have just received, so that he may cut off a small piece from the end. The importance of these customs to the barber himself may be estimated when it is stated that the permission to grow beards, granted to the navy about ten years ago, caused such discontent amongst the seafaring shavers, that the government increased their pay. The messes into which the seamen and marines are divided in every ship are numbered consecutively from Number One upwards; and each is called, in order of numbers, to receive the rations due to its members for the day, or for particular meals. The one standing first in turn is changed every day; and "first call" belongs of right to that mess which has to pump the daily supply of water for drinking and cooking purposes.

Sailors' amusements do not in these days differ much from those of other classes of the community. They have been especially smitten with the passion for amateur theatricals which is to be observed in so many different societies on shore, and will go to an infinity of trouble to "rig up" a theatre, prepare dresses, and study parts. The old sea-songs are now rarely heard, and the lays of the Christy Minstrels, or even the Cockney vulgarities of the music-halls, have nearly driven the songs of Dibdin and the old "Fore Bitters" (from the seat usually occupied by the singer) altogether from the fore-castle. One game, with an old nautical history, is still occasionally played afloat. It is a maritime adaptation of Baste the Bear, and is played by the bear, or "monkey," being suspended in a loop of rope which just allows his feet to touch the planks of the deck, he and the other players being armed with a "colt," or knotted handkerchief, or even a piece of rope. The outside players rush past and try to strike him, and if struck by him have to take his place. His frantic efforts to reach an assailant usually result in his being carried off his feet, and flying out to the extremity of his suspending rope, first in one direction and then in another, like an ill-regulated pendulum, thus offering excellent opportunities of

castigation to his opponents. Its name is Sling the Monkey.

On the whole, it may be said that, though seamen are fast becoming assimilated to their fellows on land, there still exists a certain amount of local colour in life on board ship, to remind us forcibly of the days when they really lived as a class apart, and were apt to be as surprised and puzzled by the manners and customs of landmen, as the latter were at those peculiar to the sea.

### MY LAND OF BEULAH.

A STORY IN FIFTEEN CHAPTERS. CHAPTER IX.

I HAD been at Hazledene ten days—or was it ten years?

Could I be the same Nell who played at hare-and-hounds with little Amy and her companions that last day at Summerfield, and sang for very gladness of heart to the sound of the old yellow-faced piano in the music-room afterwards?

It is a terrible thing to stand still in thought at some epoch in our lives, and look back at a self that once was and can never be again.

But another identity puzzled me even more than my own; another change was still more startling than that in my own thoughts and feelings. How was I to reconcile the Eulalie of the past with the Lady Vansitart of to-day?

I knew enough of my whilom school-friend to be aware that her home experiences had been of a stormy nature, and that biting poverty had been one of them. How was it then that she now filled the rôle of fine lady and châtelaine of Hazledene Hall, as though "to the manner born"? Every movement, every graceful word of greeting or of parting to every guest was perfect, and the luxury with which her husband loved to surround her seemed to be part of herself.

Hazledene generally—i.e. the village, including the rector and his wife, and the old doctor, their great friend—were all mad about Lady Vansitart. The people in the county round followed suit, and I was congratulated upon my own good fortune in having such a delightful step-mother, until I longed to flee back to the old home among the Cheshire hills, and felt as if I would have given all my little world to have found myself sitting in the garden at Summerfield.

For all the other people only saw—I knew—and what I knew was this: I found myself in the position of guest in the home

that was mine by right of birth, and by the love that papa had ever given me and gave me still.

There was no change in papa, that never could have been; only we were never alone together, he and I; and something quite intangible, but yet something that would not be got over or set aside, made me shy and ashamed of the old loving ways and the old half-laughing tender words.

The night I came home I stepped into a new life; I became a different person altogether, and never, never again was the old thoughtless, impulsive Nell. Terence came down the steps to open the fly door, and welcomed me with a restrained gladness that was strange to me. I put my hand out for his, as I had always done, and the old man took it, but not without a deprecatory glance at a dazzling figure that stood just within the hall.

Papa was out when I arrived, and every sound I fancied might be his step. I had taken off my hat, smoothed my hair, come down into the drawing-room, been amazed into utter silence by Eulalie "hoping that I found everything comfortable in my room," and taken my place at the window, and still there was no sign of him.

The conversation that had for awhile, thanks to my state of bewilderment, shown an inclination to dwindle down to unpleasantly small proportions, took fresh lease of life, and my old school-friend and I were chatting over various changes at Summerfield, when the door opened slowly—I had almost written stealthily—and someone came in: a girl little older than myself, but with the oldest face on the youngest shoulders I ever saw. Her head was sleek and golden, her eyes weak and apt to blink, and she had a broad black velvet band round her throat. Altogether I was struck with the fitness of things when Eulalie said: "Nell, this is my cousin, Miss Dove—or Lettie, to be less formal." Perhaps I had got to the end of my tether in the way of astonishment already; at all events, the young lady who looked so very like a depressed and timid ring-dove hardly struck upon me as an unexpected vision. "I'm very glad to see you," she said, putting a limp and fish-like hand into mine the while. "Why Miss 'Dosa's bony knuckles are better than this!" was my own ungracious thought.

"I hope you found hot water ready in your room?" continued the girl; adding, with an apologetic air to Lady Vansitart, "I was late in coming in, Eulalie, or I should have seen to it myself."

"Lettie is good enough to look after the household matters for me occasionally," said my step-mother, with a slight heightening of the colour in her cheek.

"There can be no need for anyone to worry about me," I began; and then I heard a firm quick step and a hearty voice.

"Nell! Nell! where is she?"

"Oh, it is papa!" I cried with a great gasp, and fled along the corridor and into his arms at the end of it. He was just the same, let who might be changed; just as glad to see his little girl as ever; and a little—just a little—surprised I think to see the tears shining in her glad eyes.

Clinging to his arm, I came along the passage; and there at the drawing-room door stood Enlalie, with both her hands stretched out. I had never seen those two as husband and wife together; and now the tender light that shone in his clear eyes as they met hers, the thrill in his voice as he greeted her, told me how he had given his life ungrudgingly into her keeping.

Miss Dove stood behind her cousin, smiling a series of sympathetic smiles that melted the one into the other like dissolving views, and yet I felt—what is the subtle instinct that teaches us such things?—that she thought me a hoyden, and would have enjoyed greater repose of spirit had I remained at Summerfield indefinitely.

When I went to my room to change my dress Miss Dove went with me, apologising profusely for so doing, but doing it all the same; and seating herself in my favourite chair, pulled a little bag from her pocket, and extracted therefrom a sort of tangle that she called "her work."

"I never like to be a moment really idle," she observed virtuously, blinking at me appealingly.

"Don't you?" said I, dropping my locks upon my shoulders, and beginning to let off my rising irritation in energetic brushing. "I love idleness; I like to sit with my hands before me in a room where there is nothing but firelight."

"But time is a talent to be accounted for," said the young oracle in the arm-chair solemnly.

"And do you think tatting with pink and white silks——" I began, with my usual indiscretion.

"This is for a Dorcas-basket," put in Miss Dove reproachfully. Then she changed the subject promptly, feeling, I suppose, that I hadn't a leg left to stand upon. "You and I must try and be good friends; the other two are so absorbed in each other

—as it is only natural and right they should be—that I was really glad to hear you were coming. Sir Charles was quite kind about it, and said you would be a nice companion for me."

"Did papa say that?" My hair had fallen over my eyes, and I had to shake it back before I could look at her, as, in sore amaze, I asked the question.

"Why not?" she said, raising her weak and watery glance from the pink silks destined for the Dorcas-basket.

As I could not say why not, I said nothing.

"I like this place thoroughly," was the next remark my companion made, and the old impulsiveness caused me to blurt out:

"That's a comfort!" after which inhospitable rejoinder I saw myself blush furiously. But my arrow missed its mark.

"Yes, certainly it is," sighed the gentle ring-dove. "And I quite like the rector of the dear old parish church; he is perfectly sound, I find."

"Sound!" I repeated, puzzled at the waters into which we had drifted. "Why I never heard of there being anything the matter with Mr. Langley; he was always as strong as that stampy Shetland of his that he rides all over the country. What has been the matter with him—heart or lungs?" My hair-brush was held poised in one hand as I waited her reply.

"I was speaking of his doctrine," said Miss Lettie demurely.

I don't know what possessed me, but a feeling as if I were stifling came over me all at once; I flung down the hair-brush, threw up the window, and leaning my arms upon the sill, looked out towards the blue line in the distance longingly.

"Oh, dear!" cried Miss Lettie, hastily tying her handkerchief over her ears; "you'll get your death of cold, and bring on my neuralgia again."

But I saw fit to be deaf to all sounds save that of dear old Roland's bark.

"Why I was nearly forgetting Roland!" I said as I drew my head in. "I must run and see him."

"It rained this morning, and the yard is dreadfully damp," objected my companion.

"And my boots are dreadfully thick," I answered, taking my rebellious locks in both hands, and twisting them up as promptly as possible. It would be very rude to leave Miss Dove in solitude, but I was past being polite to anyone just then.

"You don't mean to say you are going out without your hat?"

"Yes, I am. I shall have plenty of time to beautify before the dinner-gong goes."



In consideration for possible neuralgia I shut the window, and then, without a word of apology for the fact that all my belongings were strewn about, half in, half out of my boxes, I set off down the corridor. When half way downstairs I found that I had left my handkerchief on the dressing-table, and turned back, reaching my room door to discover Miss Dove bending absorbedly over the Bible that had been papa's last birthday gift to his "dear Nell." Alas! what she perused so earnestly was not the contents of the sacred book itself, but of a letter that I had laid with loving care between the leaves—that letter in which my father had told me of his engagement to my school-friend. As she turned, and saw me staring at her with indignant eyes, Miss Lettie had the grace to blush, and in hurriedly trying to replace the letter let it flutter to the floor.

"I was just going to put your things to rights a bit," she stammered.

"Thanks," I said, picking up the fallen letter, replacing it in the Bible, and closing the clasp with a snap; "you are very kind, but the maid can do all that quite well."

A moment we stood looking at each other in silence, my opponent now by far the cooler of the two. Then I said my say, and declared war to the knife.

"Miss Dove, I have not been in the habit of having my letters read. Will you bear in mind for the future that I object to having them meddled with?"

She gathered up the tangle of silk that was one day to adorn the Dorcas-basket, and, with as much dignity as she could manage to summon up, departed.

"It is in the family evidently," I thought to myself as I went down two stairs at a time.

How glad old Roland was to see me! Terence, catching sight of me through the pantry-window, came out and told me how all the pretty speckled guinea-hens had died that winter; and how Frizzle, the black-and-tan terrier, had got caught in a hare-trap, and was "as lame as lame could be, the cratur!"

But Terence was not at his ease; every now and then he cast a furtive glance at the upper windows. However, all his restless glances merged into a smile as papa came through the gate leading from the grounds, Frizzle careering along on three legs at his heels. Roland lay down like a lion couchant, raised his golden-brown eyes to his master's face, and whined suggestively.

"Let Terence loosen his chain, papa," I said gleefully, "and you and I give him a run round the paddock?"

Terence had stooped to lift the hook from the staple, Roland had given a loud yelp of delight, and I was patting poor injured Frizzle, who evidently thought the best welcome he could give me was to stand on his hind legs as continuously as possible, when there was the sound of the soft rustle of silk, and Lady Vansitart was in our midst.

"Don't let the dog loose!" said papa quickly. "Lady Vansitart is afraid of him." Afraid of Roland!

Were the wonders prepared for me never to come to an end? and yet, as my father and his bride went slowly towards the garden, I was almost ready to allow that such fear was not wholly groundless. For Roland's upper lip was drawn to one side, showing his long white glistening teeth in a manner anything but pleasant, and he gave a low growl that changed into a whine as I laid my hand upon his great smooth head, and called him by his name.

"Does Roland often behave in this way Terence?" I asked, amazed.

The old man bent down and fumbled with the chain as he answered:

"Whiles and again, Miss Ellen, whiles and again. He's a terrible rogue is Roland, a terrible rogue entirely."

So it seemed that Roland, as well as his betters, had taken to developing new and strange phases of character.

The story of my first day at Hazledene was in all essential points the story of the days that followed it. Slowly but surely I felt myself drifting—or, rather, being drifted—from papa, and from my rightful position as the daughter of the house. My steps were dogged, my out-goings and my in-comings were watched by Miss Lettie, until the spirit of rebellion within me prompted me to oppose cunning to cunning, and to convey myself surreptitiously away into old and well-known haunts along the shore, or in the woods behind the Hall. Every visitor who came to Hazledene congratulated me on my good fortune, in having such a delightful companion as my father's beautiful young wife.

"More like an elder sister than a step-mother," said Mrs. Langley ecstatically; "and then that sweet girl, Lettie Dove; such a nice, judicious, prudent young creature!"

I knew that this last remark was meant

to have a sting in it; a sting aimed at my hoyden ways, more especially those before-named solitary rambles by flood and field. But I loved the fresh bracing air and the sound of the sea—not only for the sense of freedom I found in both, but because that prudent young creature, the gentle Dove, seldom cared to climb up the rough steep cliffs, or penetrate into the lonely caves along the shore. Did papa see and note how the heart of his little girl was being pressed to death between the iron wills of two designing women, who each played into the hand of the other? I hardly think so. He was absorbed in his love for Eulalie. He hardly seemed to live out of her presence; and she on her part was equally devoted to him.

"Well, well," I used to think to myself; "what matters it after all? He is happy—he looks younger by years in the light that shines for him on each day of his life. If I am put 'out in the cold,' perhaps it is only natural. Yes; I suppose this is what Miss 'Dosia meant when she said my 'nose would be put out.' It's not a pleasant process, and I suppose that pain at my heart that comes now and again is jealousy—just the thing in all the world I hate most cordially! And yet, oh! what would I not give for one of the old rambles with papa—" But the remembrance was too vivid; and all at once the sobs rose in my throat, and the hot tears blinded me.

Besides these bitter moments of regret other trials beset me. Miss Dove tried my temper as only a perfectly placid, perfectly impudent person can try the temper of those whom they single out as victims.

One day she saw fit to make her moan over the brogue of our faithful retainer, Terence Mahaffy. She was tatting—when was she not engaged in some charitable work?—for the benefit of that Dorcas-basket that I detested so unutterably, and looked so calmly unconscious of the impertinence of her remarks, that I was pretty nearly dumb-founded in spite of the indignation that half choked me.

"I do not speak of this for myself," she went on, searching for a thread that had wandered from the way in which it should go; "I look upon these petty trials as things sent to us as wholesome daily discipline. But Eulalie is differently constituted; she is abnormally sensitive to such things; they grate upon her nerves in a most remarkable manner. I have seen her shiver—actually shiver—when Terence hands her a dish."

"I should think it must have grated on her nerves a good deal more when she had no one to wait upon her at all, and very likely no dishes, or nothing but empty ones."

I was standing with my back to the breakfast-room window, open to the ground, as I uttered this impulsive and most injudicious rejoinder to the fair Lettie's words. Now a swift look of spiteful triumph came across her face, as she raised her eyes to the window behind me, and brought me to a sudden halt. The glass doors opened on the lawn; the soft turf had made no sound beneath the pressure of a foot-fall; and I saw as I turned that papa stood looking in upon us both. My flashing eyes, the burning colour in my cheeks, might well surprise him.

"Nell, Nell!" he said, coming to my side, and laying his hand upon my shoulder; "what is all this?"

I knew his hatred of quarrelling, his contempt of all petty bickering; I knew that I had spoken unadvisedly with my tongue; but, besides all this, I knew what I could never tell to him—the bitter provocation I had received.

"Your daughter was speaking of the poverty from which you have rescued your wife, my cousin Eulalie. I fancy that Nell thinks both she and I should be more sensible of our indebtedness to you than we are. I think she looks upon me as an intruder here. Dear Sir Charles, I cannot stay where I am not wanted. I know that Eulalie will miss me, but—"

If he had raged at me, if he had reproached me, I could have borne it better; but he only stood there looking at me in silent, loving amaze. He only said:

"Can it be Nell that treats her father's guests in this way?"

She knew she was sure of me. She sat there looking like a statue for a martyr's tomb, and knew that I should not say a word to implicate her and Lady Vansitart.

Without a word I fled from the presence of them both, but in my flight I heard the false voice say:

"Do not be hard on Nell, dear Sir Charles; you must make allowances—"

"Allowances for what?"

I knew—I knew the tale she was about to tell: the story of his "little girl's" jealousy of the woman he had married; of the change in his life that had made her no longer all in all to him; of his divided love, that once had been her sole and dear possession.

If Eulalie and her cousin had schemed to prevent me ever being alone with papa

before, they redoubled their efforts after this. I caught his eyes often resting on me with a wounded questioning expression that I could scarcely endure to meet. He redoubled his courteous kindnesses to Lettie; and, if that were possible, encompassed Eulalie with a still greater tenderness. And the holidays drew to a close.

"Oh, Land of Beulah! Oh, land of rest! where the air is very sweet and pleasant, and the flowers appear continually upon the earth." Thus ran my thoughts, shrinking more and more from the strain of my present life as relief from it drew near.

They were all very happy at Hazledene, unless it were poor old Terence, who had grown to have a worn and aged look of late, and, meeting me in the corridors, would stop as if he had something to say, shake his head, and pass on in silence. They were all very happy, and I could not flatter myself that I should be much missed—not even by papa. The romance that comes to a man late in life has all the brightness and intensity of the Indian summer—that sweet aftermath of the year's garnered harvest of days. All the pent-up tenderness of the long solitary years of his wanderings was cast at Eulalie's feet, and the sweetness of being loved—or deeming himself so—even as he loved, blinded him to all else, as the eyes that have gazed at the sun are blind to the things of earth around them.

He did not love me less; he never loved me less. Nay, I think the time came when he loved me more even than he had done in early years.

When the last evening at home came round, and the shadow of the coming parting was over me, my mind was in a strange whirl of conflicting feelings. On the one hand, glad even to thankfulness to think of Miss Mary's greeting and the peace and freedom that would be mine once more when I should reach my Land of Beulah, I was on the other smarting with the pain of that near good-bye that I had never said to my father without a pang, and that now seemed doubly bitter.

A miserable sense of distrust, too—a distrust not only of Lettie, that was nothing, but of Eulalie—had been growing in my heart. The mirror in the music-room had been the first to tell me that my once loved friend was no true gentlewoman; a hundred trifles light as air had told me the same story since. Her way of speaking to the servants when papa was not by jarred upon me, and

made me ready to fling myself into the fray, and take up arms in their behalf. I found, too, that she had turned the three dear ladies of Summerfield into ridicule to Miss Dove: a discovery that sent me promptly to the quiet of my own room, there to fight with a rising passion of indignation that bade fair to urge me on to untold imprudences of speech. "How could she—how could she, when they did so much for her!" I sobbed, as I paced up and down my room; and my heart added: "The old mirror told the truth; she is false—false—false!"

Well, the last evening at home came, and I got a sort of desperate feeling over me—a determination to be happy my own way for just that once, and, "after that, the Deluge."

When papa left the dining-room, and joined us in the drawing-room, I went straight up to him, slipped my hand within his arm, and put up my face for a kiss.

"You know I am going away to-morrow," I said, just as if there had been no one else in the room save he and I, "so I want to be spoiled and petted a bit to-night."

Miss Dove might blink like an owl, Eulalie might look calmly amazed—I cared not; I was going away to-morrow; I would have my fling to-night.

But, alas! the strongest of us cannot always count upon our physical endurance; and no sooner did papa fold his arm about me, and draw my head down to his shoulder, than the "climbing sorrow" took my breath, and set me sobbing. I set my teeth hard, but it was no use to struggle—give an inch to expression of feeling and it takes an ell—and in another moment I was clinging about papa's neck weeping bitterly.

"Dear me, the child is quite hysterical," said Lady Vansitart, hurrying to my side. The Dove made queer little noises with her lips expressive of surprise and sympathy, and fluttered to the assistance of her cousin.

Now, to be told that you are "quite hysterical," by the very individuals who have gradually goaded you into an utter abandonment of grief, is at all times a maddening experience, and one that places you apparently in the wrong; showing you up as a nervous, fanciful, silly person, upon whom your oppressors, superior from their self-possession and common-sense, look down, even while they pity.

Eulalie suggested a glass of sherry;



the Dove cooed out something about a "few drops of red lavender;" both urged my immediate adjournment to my own room. This last suggestion was carried out, though perhaps hardly as they had meant it should be; for papa went with me, and telling them to leave me to him, closed the door upon them both.

"Nell," he said, "is anything making you unhappy? Is there anything you would like to say to me? My darling, I could not bear to think of there being any want of confidence between us. I have fancied you changed of late; I said so to Enlalie."

"Yes," I said, twirling the ring upon his finger slowly round and round; "and what did she say?"

"She spoke very lovingly of you, Nell—as she always does—no one has your good so much at heart; but she hinted at some possible school trouble."

The hot blood surging to my face dried my tears; I grew quite strong again all in a moment.

"She is mistaken then," I said; "quite mistaken. I never had a school trouble in my life."

He drew a long breath as if some weight were taken off his mind, and then he stroked my hair tenderly and kissed me. I was his "own little girl" once more for that one short while—that one short while. Yet he seemed but half satisfied, for, after a long silence, he repeated his first question, looking wistfully in my face.

"Is there nothing you would like to say to me, Nell, before we part?"

I turned away.

"Nothing, nothing, dear papa," I said. For how could I complain to him of his wife? A woman must fall very low before she can teach her tongue to speak against another woman to that woman's husband, even in self-defence; gain what she may by such a course, the gain must turn to dust and ashes in her mouth.

As papa opened my door I heard the whisk of a dress at the end of the passage.

"What have they to gain by all this watching and plotting?" I wondered to myself as I lay awake that night.

The next morning I left Hazledene, and papa and Enlalie drove with me to the station. We left Miss Lettie behind, blinking and kissing her hand at the hall-door, while Terence smiled at me from the back-ground.

I had been round to the yard and patted Roland's head—nay, more, I had bent down and dropped a kiss upon his sleek, soft,

wrinkled forehead; and then he had lain down full length, and whined after me as I went away.

When I reached Summerfield Miss Mary was the first to greet me, and I had some ado to prevent repeating the quite hysterical proceedings of the night before, for I was glad and sorry all in a breath.

"Have you been happy, child, at home?" said my good friend, as she and I walked over to Bromley church to the Wednesday-evening service some hours later.

"No; but I think I ought not to speak about it," I answered, steadying my voice as best I could, and feeling by no means sorry that we were in the dusky gloaming.

"Child," she said, "dear child."

"Yes," I put in quickly; "yes, that is what I am, and Summerfield—my Land of Beulah—is my home."

Summer was soon upon us in all its fullest beauty, and never had I seen the roses in our garden more plentiful than they were that year. I was very young still, and the young have a power of casting aside sorrow that belongs to them alone. The vividness of my trials at Hazledene faded, and before long I heard that, in consequence of Lady Vansittart being in delicate health, she and my father were going a yachting expedition in the Ladybird, and that the length of their cruise would be indefinite. I had a dear kind letter from papa telling me of all this. I had many other letters of like nature in the days that followed, now from this place, now from that, and always the same loving happy histories of the doings of himself and his wife, always full of the same tender thought for me.

So the summer passed away, and the leaves began to fall. Those from the chestnut tree in the coppice were striped orange and brown, while those of the Virginian creeper were more beautiful in their funeral garb of rich and glowing crimson than they had been in life. The rooks were blown about sadly by the wind; the hips and haws began to redden in the hedges.

By this time I had become quite a grown-up young lady; my dresses were always long now; I climbed no more trees, played no more at hare-and-hounds with Amy and her comrades. Books that had been unknown before, began to open their meaning to me as a new life; I read *Evangeline* instead of *Ivanhoe*; the *Psalm of Life* instead of the *Swiss Family Robinson*. Hitherto it had been enough to read of

the doings of men and women good and great; now I began to long to fashion my own life after the pattern of theirs—in a word, my girlhood felt the stirrings of the womanhood within me, as the pool of old was troubled by the angel's touch.

By the end of September my father and his wife had returned to Hazledene, where they found all things "swept and garnished" under the careful administration of Miss Dove, who appeared to have become a domestic fixture.

"Eulalie is much stronger now, and has lost her cough," papa wrote; "as for me, I am flourishing."

This was satisfactory, but nothing to what followed, for he told me he was coming to Summerfield for a long day. He added that he "knew me for an impatient little mortal as ever breathed," and so fixed upon a date only ten days off for this promised visit. Ten days is not a long time in itself, yet my longing made it seem so. The night before the day I could not sleep. I had heard nothing further from Hazledene, but I did not doubt that all was well—it was joy that kept me waking; they were strangely vivid thronging thoughts of happy past times that made me lie and count the hours chimed from Bromley church-tower—those memories of little things and little words that come to us in such quiet, silent hours, like angel visitants. Just as a faint streak of grey light fell upon my bedroom floor I sank into a heavy sleep, and then all the sweet memories fled like elves at dawn, for the dream-child came to me and wept and wailed, lifting its wee, white, weary face to mine.

"Nell, how heavy your eyes look," said Miss Mary, as I kissed her next morning; "you must go for a turn round the garden to brighten you up before Sir Charles comes; never mind your books, love—to-day must be a holiday."

Papa could not be at Summerfield before mid-day, so I had plenty of time "to brighten myself up," as Miss Mary said, and soon felt all the better for a stroll round the coppice, and a scramble in the wood.

As I came towards the house again,

Amy—now grown to be what she called "a great durl"—met me.

"Here's a funny, funny letter for 'oo, Nellie dear," she said, holding a small blue envelope high above her curly head.

It certainly was a funny letter. The address, beginning at the top of the left-hand corner, ran down-hill all the way nearly to the lower corner on the right; and the writer had evidently been mindful to practise economy in the matter of capitals, for he or she had bestowed one on Vansitart, but none on the "miss" that preceded it.

Laughing, I opened my letter, saying: "I really think, Amy, it must be from Mr. Twinkler."

Then I read it, but the words conveyed no meaning to my mind.

Amy, poor frightened child, clung to me, and I saw her lips move, but I heard nothing. I was deaf, and—yes, it must be so—mad! I looked wildly round as if for aid against some arm that was raised to strike me down where I stood.

Again my eyes grew to the words traced in strange uncertain characters upon the paper in my hand.

"DEAR MISS ELLEN,—Which it is my sorrowful dooty to tell you as my master died very suddint early this day. They said they would rite: but I know it was no such thing, or you would have cum. I have lost a good master, but he is gone to a Better world.—From your umble servant,  
TERENCE MAHAFFY."

This time I grasped the meaning of what I read. I tried to take a step forward—to get to Miss Mary, I think—but the dank, leaf-strewn grass rose up to meet me, and, as I thrust out my hand to keep it off, all things—even my awful sorrow—faded into nothingness.

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